

People and Place



The 1997 conference was co-sponsored by the National Park Service
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Printing of the proceedings was made possible
through the generous support of the Yellowstone Association.



4th Biennial Scientific Conference
on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem
October 12–15, 1997
Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming

People and Place

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE IN GREATER YELLOWSTONE



PROCEEDINGS

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National Park Service
Yellowstone Center for Resources
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming
2004



Suggested citation: Schullery, Paul and Sarah Stevenson, editors. 2004. *People and Place: The Human Experience in Greater Yellowstone*. Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Conference on the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, October 12–15, 1997, Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: Yellowstone Center for Resources.

For ordering information, contact: Publications Office, Yellowstone Center for Resources, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190; (307) 344-2203.

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Foreword

IN 1991, when we initiated our biennial conference series in Yellowstone, we fully intended that each meeting attract as many academic disciplines as possible. In fact, the compliment we may have heard most often over the years has been an expression of appreciation for just how widely our agendas range across the scholarly spectrum. A glance at the agendas and proceedings for the first three conferences—which focused on vegetation, fire, and predators—reveal the breadth of information, and the corresponding breadth of audience appeal these gatherings generated.

The year of the fourth conference, 1997, was also the 125th anniversary year of Yellowstone National Park. It was the perfect occasion to celebrate and showcase the wealth of humanities-related research that was underway in greater Yellowstone. As you will see from this generous and representative selection of papers from that conference, it was even more successful than its predecessors in attracting a full, multidisciplinary crowd.

Besides the many outstanding papers presented, the conference featured a series of keynotes by some of the nation's leading figures in environmental history and park-related humanities research. We are fortunate to include several of those presentations here. Conservationist and historian T. H. Watkins, from Montana State University, delivered a stirring Leopold Lecture on the fate of the modern environmental movement. Donald Worster, University of Kansas, considered the parallels and distinctions between Canadian and United States conservation movements. Patricia Limerick, University of Colorado, explored the quirky and revealing nature of the idea of progress in the history of Yellowstone management. And Gordon Brittan, Montana State University met the daunting challenge of summarizing the vast array of ideas, opinions, information, and dreams that were expressed through the three very busy days of sessions.

It was our best-attended conference to date, and in the years since it was held it has achieved a singular productivity record among our conferences, not only in terms of presented papers that later appeared in professional journals and other outlets, but also in a surprising number of papers that developed into or became significant parts of books.

We see these conferences as part of one large and very involved conversation about Yellowstone research, to be sure, but also about Yellowstone's role in the world and our responsibilities to the park and its posterity. As you will see in the papers in this proceedings, that conversation continues to be vital, exciting, and urgently valuable.

Through this proceedings, we formally and gratefully acknowledge the roles played by our sponsors and by many of the presenters. We also recognize and thank the Planning Committee, ably chaired by Laura Joss. They attended to a thousand logistical, procedural, and diplomatic details. The Program Committee, whose task it was to shape the agenda into a coherent and compelling event, likewise did an

outstanding job. We are especially grateful to Susan Rhoades Neel, then of the History Department, Montana State University, not only for chairing the Program Committee but also as the primary shaper of the goals this conference so admirably met. And we thank the conference services office of Montana State University, with whom the National Park Service cooperated in many of the arrangements and events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Varley', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John D. Varley
Director, Yellowstone Center for Resources